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**THE EMERGENCE OF BEBOP:
CHARLIE PARKER AND HIS HISTORICAL RECORDINGS 1944-1948**

by

Anthony Richard Geraci

**FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN LIBERAL STUDIES**

SKIDMORE COLLEGE

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Readers: Clyde Stats, John Anzalone

**THE MASTER OF ARTS PROGRAM IN LIBERAL STUDIES
SKIDMORE COLLEGE**

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“If you don’t live it, it won’t come out your horn.”

“They teach you there’s a boundary line to music. But, man, there’s
no boundary line to art.”

“I realized by using the high notes of the chords as a melodic line, and by the right harmonic
progression, I could play what I heard inside me. That’s when I was born.”

(Charlie Parker)

Introduction

The jazz style known as bebop developed in reaction to the musical, cultural, and historical realities of America in the 1920s and 1930s. Musically, bebop grew out of and away from the elaborate orchestral arrangements of the swing bands of the 1930s through the early 1940s. It fed the musician's desire to incorporate individual improvisation and virtuosity as the focal point of the compositions within a small musical ensemble. An example of a musician who epitomized the bebop style and demonstrated the development of this musical genre was Charlie Parker. By analyzing Parker's Savoy and Dial recordings from 1944 to 1948, a compositional portrait of bebop emerges.

The musicians that created bebop were looking to challenge themselves in ways that had not previously happened. The reharmonization and chord substitutes within compositions and the vertical identity of each chord were new ways to approach both improvisations as well as to alter the chord progression of a composition. The color palette of Parker's compositions, the lines of his melodies that incorporate the use of the flat five (on a ii minor 7 flat five, and also on dominant 7 chords) and the subsequent flat 9 (on a V7 dominant chord), the upper extensions of chord tones, the frequent use of very fast or slow moody tempos, the structure and repetition of referential chord changes (chord progressions from already existing songs with original melodies composed over the chord progression), and the patterns of his rhythmic ideas all combine to produce a signature style that has come to be known as bebop. Once these particular musical characteristics are identified through close analysis of Parker's recordings, a modern composer could replicate them in a contemporary interpretation of bebop, illustrating how jazz music is like a two-way mirror, simultaneously reflecting back to its forbearer's and forward to its present social and musical reality.

This project will conduct such a close analysis. Each recording demonstrates how Parker moved away from the standards of swing orchestration to the characteristic improvisations of bebop. Each analysis will track the changes in style as Parker experimented, and each analysis will highlight the structure of the composition. Personal and relevant information on the recording dates will also be included. Parker's personal life will be looked at as a way to connect the musician to the music that he created.

Two important cities, Kansas City and Harlem, will be looked at as early musical locales that helped pave the way for musicians such as Parker to nurture their creative endeavors. Kansas City and Harlem are both important locales in the development of bebop. The rich musical environment of these two locales brought together musicians and gave them the time to formulate their new ideas.

I also have composed, scored, and recorded a modern composition in the style of bebop composers such as Parker and Thelonious Sphere Monk using the characteristics of the style that this paper's analysis has revealed. Together, the analysis and the composition demonstrate how bebop and Charlie Parker changed the face of music in the 1940s and beyond.

Charles Christopher Parker Jr., born August 29, 1920 and died March 12, 1955, and known to the jazz enthusiasts as Charlie "Yardbird" Parker, is perhaps the most revered jazz musician of the twentieth century. His accomplishments on the alto saxophone set standards for musicians that are still in effect today. The musicians who are credited with being the pioneers of the bebop movement are Parker, trumpeter John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie, pianist Thelonious Sphere Monk, and drummer Kenny Clarke. Parker was born in Kansas City, Kansas, but moved to Kansas City, Missouri when he was seven years old. Parker was only twenty years old in 1940

and already had the experience of the legendary Kansas City jam sessions to his credit, as well as playing with the great pianist Jay McShann and his Orchestra starting in 1938.

The Kansas City Scene

The Kansas City night life was the impetus that propelled Parker from an average player to someone who helped define a new direction in jazz. His musical education was obtained on the streets of Kansas City which was a utopia for working musicians and a place to meet other musicians. As with many periods in jazz, the illegal or seedy elements of society allowed musicians the time and space needed to hone their craft. Prostitution, illegal clubs for alcohol which were also known as speakeasies, gambling, and racketeering all provided the musician with gigs and the ability to make a living. Tom Pendergast, a politician who ran the First Ward in Kansas City, allowed all manner of illegal operations to flourish as long as he was appropriately given a share of the different operations taking place. A lot of money flowed into Kansas City.

The gambling take alone was estimated to run one hundred million dollars annually and the sale of narcotics over one million dollars. There are no figures for the sale of alcoholic beverages. They must have been enormous – and tax free. As an entertainment center, Kansas City of the Pendergast era compared favorably with Las Vegas today. (Russell 2005:9)

During Prohibition when clubs and cabarets were closing all over the United States, Kansas City was thriving and musicians from all parts of the country gathered there to work. In 1935, pianist and band leader Count Basie had three of the best saxophonists in the country soloing in his band: Herchel Evans; Lester Young; and Buster Smith. Lester Young was an early and ongoing musical inspiration for Parker. Other musicians in Kansas City at that time included: alto saxophonist Harlan Leonard; pianists Jay McShann, Mary Lou Williams, Margret

Johnson and Pete Johnson; trumpeter Hot Lips Page; vocalists Jimmy Rushing and Big Joe Turner (with whom I worked in the 1980s) to name but a few. This showcases the caliber of musicians in Kansas City at this time. Having such great musicians to listen to and play with in Kansas City helped pave the way for Parker to work out his unique improvisational techniques. Parker talked about his practice regime: “I took the scales a half a step at a time [C major, C#, D, etc.]...After I learned the scales, I taught myself to play the blues in all twelve keys. Then I learned ‘I Got Rhythm’ (George-Ira Gershwin) and ‘Cherokee’ (Ray Noble) in all the twelve keys” (Porter and Ullman 1992:222). Knowing all of the scales and the very demanding melody and chord progression of ‘Cherokee’ as well as ‘I Got Rhythm’ gave Parker a foundation to build his unique phrasing and improvisational technique. Parker progressively used these techniques along with the upper structures of the chords: the ninth; eleventh; and thirteenth. In a C Major chord they would be the notes D, F, and A. Parker also took full advantage of the Kansas City nightlife.

Charlie Parker got one of his earliest gigs with The Jay McShann Orchestra. McShann was the first to bring Parker into the recording studio and had a hit recording in 1941 with his composition “Confessin’ the Blues” (Jay McShann). Parker, though in the background of the recording, showcases his ability to weave through the tune with celerity and accuracy. That would become one of the predominant features of Parker’s style that developed into what transitioned into bebop. The night to night musical battles that lasted into the morning and sometimes into the afternoon would be hard to replicate today. Gone are the days of the all night jam sessions and places for musicians to congregate and share ideas after hours. Charlie Parker and bebop itself could not have come into their own if not for these late night institutions of

higher learning that allowed the musicians the freedom and environment to pursue their musical goals.

Harlem and the Roots of Bebop

The Harlem Renaissance (1919-1935) was the first great cultural center for African American writers, scholars, and entertainers of all kinds. Bibliophile and Historian Arthur Schomburg (1925) in his essay for the *New Negro*, “The Negro Digs Up His Past:” states: “The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future. History must restore what slavery took away” (p. 670). This insightful though painful account of what African Americans had to deal with could aptly be applied to the musicians of the early bebop era. Parker and other musicians were keenly aware of what African Americans went through in the not too distant past. Segregation and the Jim Crow laws were still an unfortunate part of the American landscape during the bebop era. Musicians during this time and before began to speak in their own jargon, sometimes called “jive.” It has been suggested that saying “hey man” to acquaintances was a way to get away from the stereotype of African Americans being called “boy.” Writer, publisher, and educator Alaine Locke “defined the New Negro in terms of urban migration, educational opportunities, and increased interracial cooperation-especially, but not exclusively, in the arts” (Anderson 2001:115).

Harlem, as early as the 1920s, was being recognized for its musical development. A school of jazz piano known as Harlem stride piano set a standard to adhere to for musicians on any instrument. Pianists such as James P. Johnson, Willie “the Lion” Smith, and Thomas “Fats” Waller were all leading practitioners of this style. Their piano playing was rooted in a basic ragtime style but with more advanced harmonies and improvisations. Parker knew he had to have a thorough understanding of the music that came before him to prepare and allow him to create

music that would be part of his future. By listening to these great pianists, musicians such as Parker could hear and begin to see what was possible in improvisation and how to use one's own unique virtuosity within the framework of a composition.

The leading nightclub of the 1920s was the Cotton Club at the corner of Lenox Avenue and 142nd Street in Harlem. Other important night clubs during this period were Connie's Inn and Small's Paradise. Harlem was the place to hear some of the most exciting jazz bands performing alongside extravagant floor shows, comedians, and dancers.

The Duke Ellington Orchestra got one of its first big breaks by being the Cotton Club's exclusive band in 1927 and continuing until 1931. During this time, Ellington was able to focus on his legendary compositional and arranging style. He not only had to have his band ready for their numbers during the show, but he also had to compose musical arrangements to back up dancers, singers, and comedians. There were two shows a night, six nights a week that lasted at least two hours each. Another added feature was that the Ellington Orchestra broadcasted live on WCBS (a New York City radio station) five to six nights a week from the Cotton Club. This gave them national exposure, which inspired other musicians to want to make their way to New York City. After a night's performance, many musicians would congregate at apartments or small clubs to keep the music flowing. This is where the fundamentals of bebop were first starting to simmer, when musicians started to be more adventurous in their improvisations and how they viewed improvisation.

The liberal Harlem consciousness allowed free thinking African Americans such as Alain Locke and Langston Hughes, and white critics such as Carl Van Vechten, to express their views of the emerging black consciousness in the country, and especially New York City. These

writers, poets, and critics tried to relate what was going on in Harlem to what was going on in the rest of the country, as well as in Europe.

The Harlem scene of the late 1920s can also be seen as one of the first places where African American musicians such as Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway were becoming part of the music mainstream for both black and white audiences. Though most African American musicians of this era were paid substantially lower wages than their white counterparts, they were still making a respectable steady living. These musicians were immaculately dressed and debonair. In 1921 pianist Eubie Blake's and lyricist Noble Sissle's musical revue *Shuffle Along* opened on Broadway. This led the way for similar productions of African American works to be staged on Broadway. By having all these musicians in the same city at the same time, one can assume that the communal creative atmosphere was beginning to percolate. The musicians were then able to ask the question, "What else can we do with our music?"

Harlem nightclubs also attracted the most popular blues and jazz singers such as Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Adelaide Hall, Florence Mills, and Ethel Waters who regularly made their living on the road through a series of one night engagements in different locales. Hearing and working with touring musicians allowed local musicians to catch up on what was happening musically in other parts of the country.

It was not only the musicians who were starting to react to a new phase of jazz but the community that the musicians were part of as well. Other performers such as dancers, comedians, and people working the tables at the various clubs would also want to congregate after their respective shifts were over. Dancing was an integral part of the Harlem nightscape and Harlem clubs hired approximately three hundred female dancers and one hundred fifty male dancers to be in the various stage shows at the clubs. Many lay dancers who came to the clubs

became known as “Harlemites,” and they often stole the show from the professionals. Journalist and satirist H.L. Mencken observed and wrote, “No dance invented by white men has been danced at any genuinely high-tone shindig in America since the far-off days of the Wilson Administration (first term as President, 1916)” (Mencken 1927:159). Parker was drawn to New York City for these very reasons. He followed one of his mentors from Kansas City, arranger and alto saxophonist Harlan Leonard, and got a job washing dishes at Jimmy’s Chicken Shack in Harlem just so he could listen to pianist Art Tatum’s virtuosity on a nightly basis. It was during this time that Parker was able to get the sounds that were swirling in his head to his horn. By avoiding the use of formal arrangements, the musicians would call off tunes at jam sessions that they all knew and then let their improvisations be the focal point. The social aspect of Harlem cannot be overlooked. Parker and other musicians would get together for jam sessions at Monroe’s Uptown House in Harlem that started at around four a.m. Musicians such as Parker felt that they were able to be a part of something modern, where skilled musicians who were often coming off of tours with name bands that were led by bandleaders such as Cab Calloway needed time to play music that was more adventurous than what was happening in their main gig.

Beyond Harlem

During this time (1930s-1940s) and earlier, Europe was already embracing the identity of the American Negro artist by having groups such as the Fisk Jubilee Singers (Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee) perform as early as 1873. Louis Armstrong made his European debut in 1932. The European audience was different from the American audience in that they felt that these musicians were also artists, which is a fundamental different way of respecting the musician and their talents. Musicians for many years have thought of Europe as a right of passage for their careers. There is an air of anticipated artistic freedom and acceptance that

continues in Europe today. Parker, on his first European concert tour, was amazed at how much the European community knew about him and his music. After World War II there was a slow loosening of racial tensions, but by no means complete. This was especially true in the northeast United States and also in Europe. There were also advancements in recording techniques. The introduction of the 33 1/3 LP record in 1948 allowed musicians to extend their performance on record. Musicians also had better modes of transportation within the aviation field and more trustworthy cars and buses. These progressive occurrences all helped the musicians who would forge the development of bebop.

One of the factors that kept bebop from being nationally recognized in its early days was the 1942 ban on recording by the American Federation of Musicians (AFM). Then President of the AFM James Petrillo argued:

Why should a musician contribute to his own unemployment by making a record? Since the Supreme Court had recently confirmed that artists had no control over the use of their own recordings after the point of sale, Petrillo had to devise a more roundabout strategy-a demand that record companies contribute a fixed fee from every recording to a union fund for unemployed musicians-and strong-arm tactics to make it work. (DeVeaux 1997:295)

Jazz music and recordings were well established up to the recording ban. The constant transformation and development of musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and a host of others was captured on recordings. Their recordings reflected the forward progression that their individual contribution to jazz was focusing on through the years. With bebop, it was

the sudden departure from the big bands and swing era to something more personal and expressive. Author James Lincoln Collier (1995) writes:

By about 1942, it was clear to musicians that here was something more than mere experimentation. Here was a new kind of music. Unhappily, we cannot pinpoint these developments...As a result [of the ban], there are few commercial recordings of any of the bop players during the years they were working out their innovations. (355)

Dizzy Gillespie explained how he learned to interpolate chromatically descending chains of ii-7/V7 into tunes like “I Can’t Get Started” (Ira Gershwin-Vernon Duke): “We’d do that kind of thing in 1942 around Minton’s a lot. We’d been doing that kind of thing, Monk and I, but it was never documented because no records were being made at the time” (DeVeaux 1997:296-7). The ban ended in September of 1943 when Decca Records agreed to pay royalties to the union. Capital Records gave in one month later. It took more than a year for the two other major record labels, Columbia and Victor, to finally agree in November of 1944.

A few other obstacles to documenting the rise of bebop need to be noted. The Second World War was at its height and rationing affected virtually everything that musicians needed to further their careers. As stated before, even though transportation and electronic devices were continually being updated, the war effort still made it hard for musicians to be on the road. Shellac for records was severely cut back. Gas rationing, tire (rubber) and transportation issues were all part of the musicians’ livelihood that were affected. The Jim Crow laws were still in effect, which aimed at segregating African Americans from whites. This was most prevalent in the southern United States but was also in existence in the north. This made it extremely difficult for black bands in the 1930s, 1940s, and to some extent through the 1970s to be on the road.

They often had to rely on the hospitality of the black community for lodging and to put up with the abusive behavior shown to them by club owners and the white southern populace. Though this is a generalization, many musicians opted not to go on Southern road trips. Parker told trumpeter Red Rodney when they were on the road together in 1950 and playing in the south “that this would be his last Southern tour, no matter how much money was guaranteed” (Russell 1973:291).

Drummer Max Roach (1972) surmised:

What ‘jazz’ means to me is the worst kind of prejudice. I could go down a list of club names throughout the country which are a disgrace to somebody who has been in the business as long as I have... Jazz to me has meant small dingy places, the worst kind of salaries and conditions that one can imagine. (3-6)

The African-American voice was beginning to be a powerful force during the war years. Dizzy Gillespie declared: “My music emerged from the war years... and it reflected those times in the music. Fast and furious, with the chord changes going this way and that way, it might’ve looked and sounded like bedlam, but it really wasn’t” (Gillespie 1985:201). Magazines by and for African Americans such as *Jet* and *Ebony* were both started in the war years.

Parker’s timing is pivotal within the framework of the developing music scene in and around Harlem in the early 1940s. The freedom from not being tied down to overtly orchestrated music gave him and other musicians who were looking forward from their time spent in the swing bands to a new basis of forging their style of jazz. After years of playing in the big bands such as Cab Calloway’s Orchestra and the Billie Eckstein Orchestra, the freedom that these

musicians were giving to themselves in a small band format allowed them to make the music that they were longing to play.

Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, and the other musicians that were involved in the early stages of bebop owe a debt of gratitude to musicians such as Duke Ellington for helping establish Harlem as a center of innovative and creativity within the music community. The Harlem Renaissance provided the groundwork to allow African American musicians to view their music as a serious art form instead of music to listen to casually, or dance to. These musicians wanted the audience to listen. The symbiotic relationship the musicians felt in Harlem was part of the reason they were able to forge new paths in jazz. The late night jam sessions at Minton's and other clubs all provided the opportunity for these musicians to work out the music that they had longed to play.

Kansas City allowed Parker and many other musicians the training and opportunity to expand the ongoing development of jazz music. The musicians that were part of the Kansas City and Harlem scene helped Parker by being both an inspiration and constant reminder that in order to be a great jazz musician you could never stop striving to renew yourself on your instrument. The interaction Parker had with so many great jazz artists in these two cities helped him in his quest for freedom in improvisational jazz that became known as bebop. Harlem and later Manhattan embodied the cultural necessities to let these musicians explore a new path for jazz music.

Charlie Parker's Dial and Savoy Recordings

Charlie Parker's recordings, starting in 1944 on the Savoy Record label and followed by the Dial Record label, were the culmination of his artistry and mastery of the alto saxophone. His relentless pursuit of what was possible on his own instrument and what was possible within a

small band format came to fruition in the years from 1944 to 1948. The recording output from this time is truly remarkable. His songs such as “Red Cross,” “Billie’s Bounce,” “Moose the Mooche,” “Yardbird Suite,” and many more have become standards for all aspiring jazz musicians. These songs will be discussed in detail later in this paper.

Parker and other jazz musicians in the bebop era often used established chord progressions by other composers to compose their own original melodies. This practice is known as a contrafact. One of the most frequently used songs for improvising and composing original melodies to an existing chord progression was George and Ira Gershwin’s “I Got Rhythm” (see lead sheet below) which was published in 1930, made popular in the musical *Girl Crazy*, and was sung by Ethel Merman. “I Got Rhythm” is a thirty-two measure AABA song form. This composition has provided one of the most widely used progressions for improvisation in jazz music along with the twelve and sixteen bar blues progression. Parker used both these stylistic progressions extensively in his musical compositions.

Songs credited to Parker and other musicians associated with Parker that use the “I Got Rhythm” chord progression are “Bird’s Nest,” “Max Making Wax” (Oscar Pettiford), “Moose The Mooche” (see example below), “Cheers” (Howard McGhee), and “Scrapple from the Apple.” Compositions that Parker wrote new melodies to existing chord progressions include: “How High the Moon” (Morgan Lewis-Nancy Hamilton) which became one of Parker’s most recognizable compositions “Ornithology.” The chord progression to “Rosetta” (Earl Hines-Henri Woode) became another one of Parker’s most popular compositions, “Yardbird Suite.” Long time Duke Ellington trombonist Juan Tizol composed “Perdido” and Parker turned it into the odd named “Klackoveesedstene,” which Parker told Dean “Dino” Benedetti (Benedetti recorded Parker for years in clubs, often just recording his solos and then turning the recording machine

off) that it just meant “sound.” I was fortunate in my early touring days to play with the great Chicago Blues harmonica player “Big” Walter Horton (Shakey) and I once asked him if he wrote one of the tunes that we played. He turned to me and nodded, “un hum-I heard it-then I wrote it!”

Using these common chord progressions allowed the musicians to already have the songs in their heads, even if the melodies were different from the original compositions. Most musicians of that era would know the chord progression to “How High the Moon” and would be able to devote their creative energy to their improvisation as when Parker composed his own melody (from “How High The Moon”) to compose “Ornithology.” Another reason is that the musician (or record companies) would not have to pay royalties to the original composer.

I GOT RHYTHM COSTUME

Bb G⁷ C⁷ F⁷

Bb Eb⁷ Eb⁶ E⁰ (OR Ab⁷) D⁷ G⁷ C⁷ F⁷ Bb

A⁷ D⁷ D⁷ G⁷

G⁷ C⁷ C⁷ F⁷

Below are the chord changes to “Moose The Mooche” (Parker, “The Complete” Dial 1003). It was recorded on March 28, 1946 in Hollywood, California. The musicians recording on this date are: Charlie Parker, alto sax; Miles Davis, trumpet; Eli “Lucky” Thompson, tenor sax; Michael “Dodo” Marmarosa, piano; Arvin Garrison, guitar; Vic McMillian, bass; and Roy Porter, drums. If one compares the first eight measures of “I Got Rhythm” and “Moose The Mooche” (named after Parker’s drug connection in Los Angeles, Emery Byrd), they are virtually the same. The bridge or B section is identical to the chords of “I Got Rhythm.” Notable differences are the omission of the VI- (G minor in the key of Bb major) in bars 1, 3, 9, and 11 in “Moose The Mooche.” There is also a standard turn around in bar 7 of “I Got Rhythm” III-, VI-, II-, V (D min., G min., C min., and F7 in the key of Bb major). The commonality between the two songs allowed musicians to communicate during jam sessions. If one hears “Rhythm changes in Bb”, rhythm changes referring to the chord progression of “I Got Rhythm”, a musician had better know what that means and be able to improvise over the chord changes. They did not want slick arrangements of the compositions. What they wanted was to play the head (melody of the composition), with the horns usually playing the head in unison and then get into the solos and use their expertise on their instruments to be the highlight within the tune. One interesting fact that in many of the songs that use the “I Got Rhythm” progression as the compositional framework of a new song that at the start of the “B” section, the first chord is played as a dominant seventh chord instead of the original minor seventh chord.

As stated before, Parker composed “Ornithology” using the chord progression from “How High The Moon.” Musicians were keenly aware of this practice. One example is as follows. Great jazz vocalist Ella Fitzgerald was known for her ability to scat. Scat singing is a way to vocally improvise using the voice as an instrument and using nonsense syllables in lieu of

words. During her rendition of “How High The Moon” on the album “The Complete Ella in Berlin” (Verve Records; 314 519 564-2) recorded on February 13, 1960, Fitzgerald starts out singing the original lyrics to the “How High The Moon.” The arrangement then goes into a double time feel with Fitzgerald making up words for one verse in an improvised manner and then in verse two she begins to scat. For the next two verses Fitzgerald uses Parker’s melody from “Ornithology” almost verbatim as its improvisational inspiration. This showcases Parker’s influence even after his death in the continuing evolution of bebop in more popular forms of jazz music.

Moose The Mooche

By Charlie Parker

C. PARKER 407

♩ = 224
PIANO 8

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Chord symbols: C-, F7, Bb, C-, F7, Bb, C-, F7, Bb7, Eb7, Bb, C-, F7, Bb, C-, F7, Bb7, Eb, Ab7, Bb, Bb, A-, D7, D-, G7, G-, C7, C-, F7, Bb, C-, F7, Bb, C-, F7, Bb7, Eb, Bb.

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Another song form that was widely used by Parker was the standard twelve and sixteen bar blues. Though the blues form is a relatively simplistic chord progression to solo over, Parker reveled in its simplicity and gave the music the dedication and reverence it deserved. The music that Parker experienced in Kansas City was very blues orientated and his knowledge of blues phrasing stayed with him his entire career. Muddy Waters, known as the Father of modern blues, once told me, “If you can’t dig the blues, you must have a hole in your soul.”

Basic Twelve Bar Blues Progression (key of C)

C7\ F7\ C7\ C7\

F7\ F7\ C7\ C7\

G7\ F7\ C7\ C7

Or this turnaround for bars 8-12

D minor7\ G7\ C7\ C7.

Parker used the blues progression in many of his compositions from *The Complete Savoy and Dial Studio Recordings (1944-1948)*: “Bird Feathers” (Dial 1058,) “Bongo Bop” (Dial 1024,) “Billie’s Bounce” (Savoy 573) and the beautiful “Relaxin’ at Camarillo” (Dial 1012.)

Another example is Parker’s “Billie’s Bounce” (Savoy 573). This song is in the key of F dominant and the progression is as follows: F7/Bflat7/F7/F7/Bflat7/Bflat 7/F7/A minor D7/G minor7/C7/F7 D7/G minor7 C7. This twelve bar blues analyzed is: I/IV/I/I/IV/IV/I/iii VI/ii-7/V7/I VI/ii-7 V7. This is also an example of how the bebop musicians added chords as an approach to dominant sevenths and major seventh chords to make the blues progression more interesting and allow different harmonic structures for improvisation.

One of Parker's first recorded original compositions was "Red Cross" (Parker, "The Complete" Savoy 532) recorded in 1944 with the Tiny Grimes Quintette made up of: Tiny Grimes, guitar; Charlie Parker, alto sax; Clyde Hart, piano; Jimmy Butts, bass; and Harold "Doc" West, drums. This composition is a modified "I Got Rhythm" progression. After the four bars intro there is a head that has five bars of Bb major, one bar of B natural, and two more bars of Bb major. Then these eight bars are repeated (AA). The bridge is a typical "I Got Rhythm" B section with (the exception being that the first chord of this B section begins with a dominant seven chord and not a minor chord) two bars of D7, two bars of G7, two bars of C7 and two bars of F7 (B section) that leads back to Bb major. Form: AABA. The head in the B section has Parker playing an improvised melody through the changes. After the solos the song goes back to AA, but the B section has Parker and guitarist Tiny Grimes trading two's, meaning that they each take two bars of the B section and improvise, then alternate after two measures. Then there is the final A section.

The first recording session that showcases Parker as a leader of the bebop revolution took place on November 26, 1945 in New York City for the Savoy Record label. It was issued as Charlie Parker's *Reboppers*. The compositions by Parker at this session have come to be standard listening for anyone involved in jazz playing or its history. What could have turned out to be a disaster came together on the pure musical prowess of the musicians assembled. Pianist Thelonious Monk was hired for the session but did not show up. Parker was late for his own recording session. Pianist Argonne Thornton was found in a nearby cafeteria and was asked to join the session and played piano only on "Thriving from A Riff" (Parker, "The Complete" Savoy 903). Nineteen year old trumpeter Miles Davis played trumpet on only the fast blues, "Billie's Bounce" (Parker, "The Complete" Savoy 573). Trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie was under

contract with Musicraft and was “technically” not at the session. He played trumpet on “Warming Up A Riff” (Parker, “The Complete” Savoy 945), and piano on what has become a jazz classic: “Now’s The Time” (Parker, “The Complete” Savoy 573). Curly Russell played bass on the session, and the drummer for the session was Maxwell “Max” Roach, who was notably the most powerful and innovative drummer at that time. Even at this early juncture in Parker’s role as leader you can see how he uses the “I Got Rhythm” chord progression on “Thriving from A Riff” and the blues progression on “Billie’s Bounce,” “Warming Up A Riff,” and “Now’s The Time.”

“Hipsters and fellow musicians trouped in and out of the studio as if it was a bus depot. Once recording got under way there were breaks to send out for soft drinks, ice, food, liquor, narcotics, and girlfriends” (Russell, “Bird Lives!” 195). One has to take into account the background and lives of these musicians. This is how they operated at their best, with liquor, drugs and women all at their disposal and at the same time intermingling and co-existing with the music. This is how they created and how they felt comfortable enough to make music.

Drug and alcohol abuse within the bebop community was unfortunately part of the lifestyle these musicians shared. Parker, for most of his musical life, was addicted to heroin and when he was not using hard drugs he was drinking cheap wine as his way to stay high. His untimely death on March 12, 1955 had the physician Dr. Freymann list his age as between fifty and sixty years old. He was in fact only thirty-five years old.

The Charlie Parker/Dizzy Gillespie Sextet came to Billy Berg’s night club in Los Angeles in late 1945 and the engagement lasted until the first week in February, 1946. The musicians for this engagement were: Parker, alto saxophone; Dizzy Gillespie, trumpet; Al Haig, piano; Lionel Hampton, vibraphone; Ray Brown, bass; and Stan Levy on the drums. During this

first West Coast gig for the pioneers of bebop, the reviews of their performances were mixed. “People came for the opening from points as far away as San Diego, Phoenix, and Seattle” (Russell, “Bird Lives!” 201). Parker was having trouble scoring heroin and had to persuade a doctor to give him some pain medication (morphine) to help him with pain from kidney stones, a made-up malady. Parker had his good nights and bad nights, depending on his success in scoring for that night. It was there in Los Angeles that Charlie Parker met Ross Russell who was launching a new jazz label named Dial Records. Russell undoubtedly knew of Parker’s appetite for drugs, but he also recognized his talents and for many years was not only Parker’s record company executive but also someone who continually looked out for his well being.

The first Charlie Parker recording session for Dial took place on March 28, 1946 at Radio Recorders recording studio in Hollywood, California. “This is the first Dial Records session led by Charlie Parker, who had final approval of personal, repertory and master takes” (Komara 1998:70). To have all these elements in his contract was a huge benefit for Parker in the studio. He picked his sidemen (the musicians on the recording session), what compositions he wanted to record that day, and had final approval of what take of a particular composition could be issued. This also shows the insight into Parker that Russell had concerning Parker and his music. He knew his bad habits but he also knew how to let a musician do the thing he does best – create music. Released as the Charlie Parker Septet, the personnel on this session are: Charlie Parker, leader, alto sax; Miles Davis, trumpet; Eli “Lucky” Thompson, tenor sax; Michael “Dodo” Marmarosa, piano; Arvin Garrison, guitar; Vic McMillan, bass; and Roy Porter, drums.

This session produced three of Parker’s most identifiable compositions on *The Complete Savoy and Dial Studio Recordings (1944-1948)*: “Moose The Mooche” (Dial 1003); “Yardbird Suite” (Dial 1006); and “Ornithology” (Dial 1002). There is also a fantastic version of “A Night

in Tunisia” (Dizzy Gillespie-Frank Paparelli; Dial 1002-D1013). Parker’s solo alto break on this tune is legendary. The speed and accuracy that Parker plays on the break shows how Parker, in helping define bebop, used his technical expertise to do what no one else could. This is one of the main characteristics of bebop, to play one’s instrument on the edge of what is possible and still maintain a sense of control especially in your improvisation.

The example on the following page illustrates the difference that Parker used in creating his own melodies to existing chord changes. Example one is the first eight measures of “How High the Moon” (Morgan Lewis). One can see an even flow of quarter notes and half notes that give the composition a seemingly relaxed feeling. Example two is “Ornithology” (Charlie Parker-Benny Harris). The difference is quite noticeable with “Ornithology” having almost all eighth notes and eighth note anticipations that give the composition a feeling of movement and tension.

All songs recorded at this session with the exception of “A Night in Tunisia” were compositions based on songs that the musicians knew and were able to improvise over. Bebop was known for its extremely fast tempos which are demonstrated throughout this session and other sessions in which Parker was involved. “Moose The Mooche” (“I Got Rhythm”) has a tempo of a quarter note=ca.222; “Yardbird Suite” (“Rosetta”) has a quarter note=ca.200; “Ornithology” (“How High The Moon”) has a quarter note=ca.230. Though the chord progressions of Parker’s compositions were sometimes identical to those of other songs, his melodic configurations were distinctly his own. The contour of his melodies often included the use of successive eighth note patterns.

How High The Moon

Morgan Lewis - Nancy Hamilton

Handwritten musical notation for the first system of "How High The Moon". The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/7. The notation includes a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The first staff contains measures 1 through 4, with a double bar line after measure 2. The second staff contains measures 5 through 8, with a double bar line after measure 6. The third staff contains measures 9 through 12, with a double bar line after measure 10. The fourth staff contains measures 13 through 16, with a double bar line after measure 14. The notation includes various chords and melodic lines.

Chords indicated above the staff:

- Measure 1: G MAJOR⁷
- Measure 2: G MAJOR⁷
- Measure 3: G MIN⁷
- Measure 4: G MAJOR⁷
- Measure 5: C⁷
- Measure 6: F MAJOR⁷
- Measure 7: F MAJOR⁷
- Measure 8: F MIN⁷
- Measure 9: B^b7

Ornithology

Charlie Parker

Handwritten musical notation for the second system of "Ornithology". The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/7. The notation includes a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The first staff contains measures 17 through 20, with a double bar line after measure 18. The second staff contains measures 21 through 24, with a double bar line after measure 22. The third staff contains measures 25 through 28, with a double bar line after measure 26. The fourth staff contains measures 29 through 32, with a double bar line after measure 30. The notation includes various chords and melodic lines.

Chords indicated above the staff:

- Measure 17: G MAJOR
- Measure 18: G MAJOR
- Measure 19: G MIN⁷
- Measure 20: G MAJOR
- Measure 21: C⁷
- Measure 22: F MAJOR⁷
- Measure 23: F MAJOR⁷
- Measure 24: F MIN⁷
- Measure 25: B^b7

This session was about a month after the Billy Berg gigs. Just after the Berg gigs Parker was issued an airplane ticket by Dizzy Gillespie back to New York, but he did not make it. He sold his ticket and got high.

Parker had decided to stay in California and was virtually broke the same day as his fellow musicians from the Billy Berg gig returned to New York City. He found a gig at a new club called the Finale, at 115 South San Pedro Street in the Little Tokyo section of Los Angeles. This gig was what Parker was used to. The Finale was basically a rundown meeting hall with low ceilings and an old upright piano, but it had great acoustics. It soon became the Minton's of the West Coast.

Charlie's presence acted as a magnet for resident and visiting jazzmen, among them Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, Miles Davis, Gerry Mulligan, Red Rodney, Hampton Hawes, Serge Chaloff, Shorty Rodgers, Ralph Burns, Johnny Bothwell, Gerald Wilson, Sonny Criss, and Charlie Ventura. Sessions at the Finale Club were probably the finest in the country in 1946, Minton's and The Street [52nd St., N.Y.] not withstanding. (Russell 1973:207)

Parker was in his element – great late night jam sessions with innovative musicians, good dope, good women, and the admiration of musicians and fans alike.

Before the next Dial recording session, Marvin Freeman, who was a partner with Russell and also the attorney for Dial Records, received the letter that is below. Parker had signed over half of his royalties to Emery "Moose The Mooche" Byrd, who was Parker's drug connection.

Because of their stature in the world of music, one often has a romantic conception of the lives of their music heroes. Duke Ellington swaggers with his top hat and tails, Louis Armstrong with his horn and handkerchief nearby, the beboppers with their zoot suits, sunglasses, and cool personas seemingly living the life of luxury. It unfortunately was not like that for Parker and most musicians.

After the close of the Finale Club, even his close friends could not find Parker.

Tracked down after a patient search by Howard McGhee, Charlie was found living in a garage on McKinley Avenue, one of the shabbier streets of the ghetto. The garage was furnished with a metal cot, two odd chairs, and an old chest of drawers, its paint scaling off in ribbons. There was a single, uncurtained window, and small rug on the concrete floor. The walls had no weather-proofing, nor was there any kind of heating. In spring time California days are sunny and mild, but the nights are apt to be cold, with temperatures dropping below forty degrees. Charlie was using his overcoat as a blanket. He had not eaten in several days and was subsisting on a diet of California port wine, available then for one dollar a gallon. The wine was Charlie's food, drink and medicine. He had prescribed it for himself. This, he told Howard, had seemed like a good time to kick the habit. Howard packed Charlie's few belongings and moved him into the stucco bungalow the McGhees were renting on West Forty-First Street. (Russell 1973:219)

The McGhees were also having their problems. Howard's wife Dorothy was Caucasian, an ex-model, blonde and beautiful. Being a bi-racial couple at this time even in Los Angeles was not easy as racism was still very prevalent. The McGhees were arrested for

sitting together in a downtown movie theater while watching a James Cagney film. They were also raided at their home and Howard was arrested for drug possession. The evidence was planted by one of the vice squad detectives during the raid, but to the credit of Howard and Dorothy, they persevered and made arrangements to reopen the Finale Club. This gave Parker a gig again, income, and he was surrounded by people who genuinely cared about his well being.

Parker's next session was on July 29, 1946 at C.P. MacGregor Studios, Hollywood, California. The personnel are: Howard McGhee, trumpet and session leader; Charlie Parker, alto sax; Jimmy Bunn, piano; Robert Kesterton, bass; and Roy Porter, drums. This session was released as the Charlie Parker Quintet. The first composition that was recorded was "Max Making Wax" (Oscar Pettiford; Parker, "The Complete" LP Dial 201). This is a typical "I Got Rhythm" thirty-two measure AABA format. What is different is that the tempo is at an astonishing quarter note=ca.322! This extremely fast tempo once again shows how the musicians who were playing bebop played at a frenzied though controlled manner.

The next composition recorded was the beautiful ballad "Lover Man" (Jimmy Davis-Rodger "Ram" Ramirez-Jimmy Sherman; Parker, "The Complete" Dial 1007). Bebop is known primarily for its extreme tempos that were played very fast; however, the beauty of the ballads which are compositions that are at a much slower relaxed tempo that were recorded by Parker and others were just as important. It was through ballads such as "Lover Man" that they were able to showcase their exceptional tone and lyrical approach to improvisation. This rendition of "Lover Man" has all the passion that is at the heart and soul of Parker's musicality and much of the drama that is also associated with Parker's legacy. Parker had taken six Phenobarbital tablets prior to recording "Lover Man". Ross Russell describes the take in the following statement.

There was a long, seemingly endless piano introduction as Jimmy Bunn marked time, waiting for the saxophone. Charlie had missed the cue. The alto came in at last, several bars late. Charlie's tone had steadied. It was strident and anguished. It had a heartbreak quality. The phrases were choked with the bitterness and frustration of the months in California. The notes passed in a sad, stately grandeur. Charlie seemed to be performing on pure reflexes, no longer a thinking musician. These were the raw notes of a nightmare, coming from a deep subterranean level. There was a last, eerie, suspended, unfinished phrase, then silence. Those in the control booth were slightly embarrassed, disturbed and deeply affected. (Russell 1973:223)

Parker later said in *Down Beat* (June 19, 1951) that this was his worst record, "A horrible thing that should never had been released." *Sparrow's Last Jump; A Story* by Elliott Grennard which was published in Harper's Magazine in May 1947 is based on this session.

The composition "Gypsy" (Billie Reid; Parker, "The Complete" Dial 1043) is another ballad, right on the heels of the previously mentioned "Lover Man," and has a very haunting effect with Parker's alto saxophone floating in and out of time. This recording seems to be a continuation of the previously recorded tune. The melody is played in a surreal combination of time and space.

The last song of the session was "Bebop" (John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie; Parker, "The Complete" Dial 1007). The tempo of this song was once again at a death defying speed, quarter note=ca.320. Parker was spinning around the microphone and Russell had to come into the studio to steady him. His solo is very erratic and he has a hard time playing the head with McGhee.

After the session Parker was taken back to his room at the Civic Hotel, which was around the corner from the Finale Club, by Slim who was a custodian at the Finale Club. After paying for the studio, Ross Russell then went to see if things were all right with Parker. Russell had also recorded some extra musical tracks with McGhee and the rhythm section to try and salvage the session in some way. When he arrived at the Civic Hotel what he found was wet pavement and a fire department salvage truck parked at the curb. Four firemen were dragging a smoldering mattress, which they proceeded to douse with chemicals to put out the charred remains. Parker had indeed been put to bed by Slim, but Parker after that made his way to the lobby asking for change for the telephone – there was no telephone in the lobby of the hotel and Parker was wearing only his socks! The manager led him back to his room after much consternation on Parker's part. This episode was repeated again and the manager locked Parker in his room. After about thirty minutes other guests noticed smoke coming from Parker's room. The mattress was on fire and flames were starting to burn the wooden bedstead. The manager dragged Parker from the room, still naked and obstinate. While still inside the building the police used a blackjack on Parker to subdue him. He was then rolled up in a blanket and carried downstairs and thrown into a police car. Parker was booked at the county jail and subsequently taken to the psychiatric ward of the county jail.

After a court hearing Parker was sent to Camarillo State Hospital for a minimum of six months. He was then released to Dial Records' owner Ross Russell who commented how good Parker looked. He got a job with Howard McGhee at the Hi De Ho Club on South Western Avenue, Los Angeles. Russell commented that "his playing was more relaxed and lyrical than before."

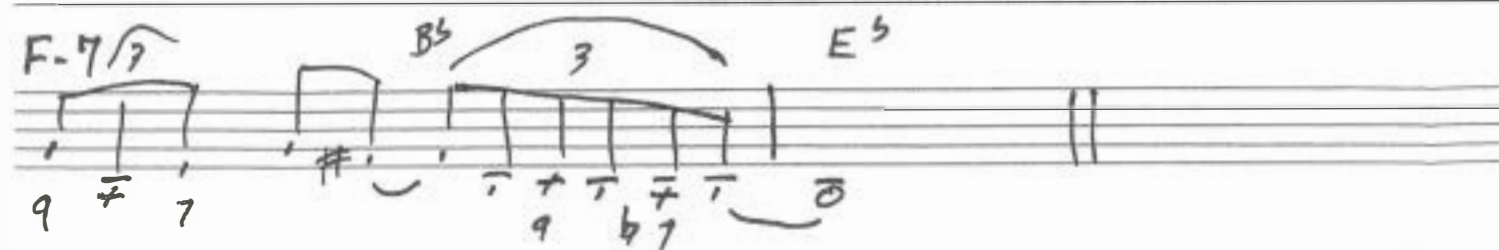
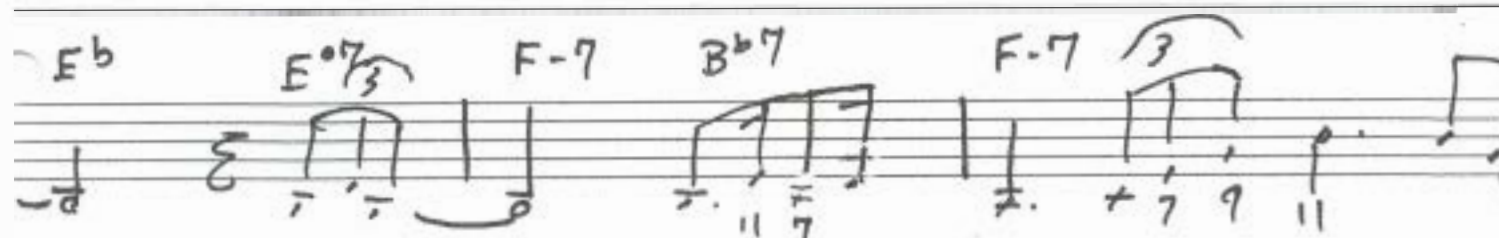
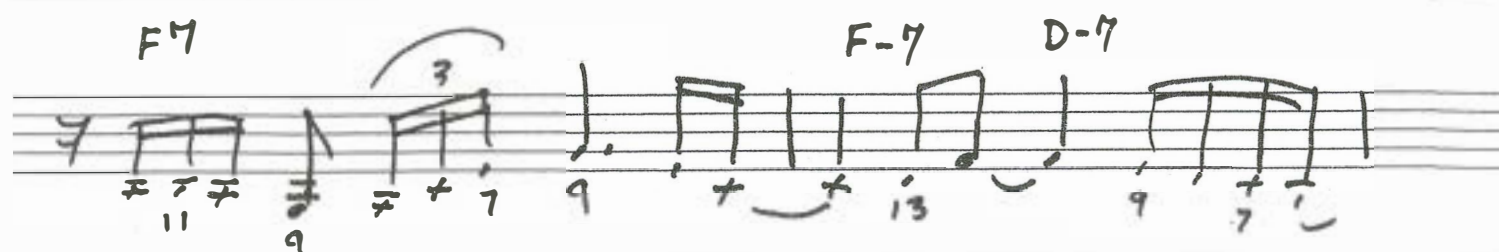
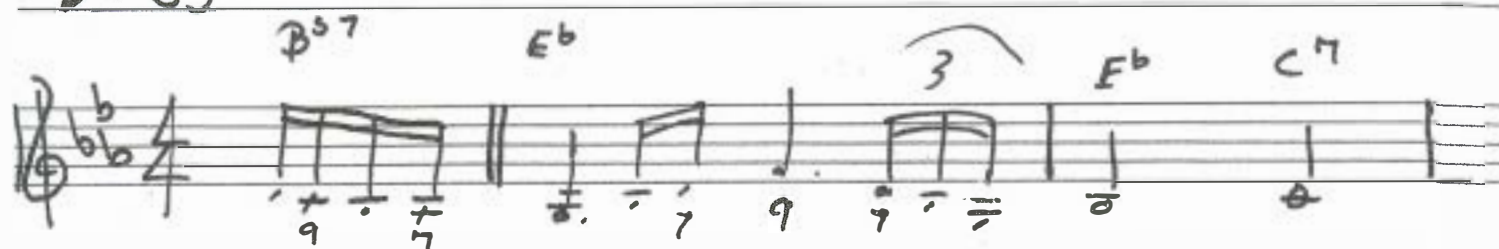
Charlie Parker did two more recording sessions for Dial while in California. The first was on February 19, 1947 at the C. P. MacGregor Studios in Hollywood. The musicians for the Charlie Parker Quartet were: Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; Erroll Garner, piano; George “Red” Callender, bass; Harold “Doc” West, drums; and Earl Coleman, vocals.

This session is in stark contrast to the previous session. Parker is playing in a relaxed, controlled manner and his tone was that of a man at peace with himself. Another factor that has to be considered is that the first two compositions recorded were vocal tracks featuring Earl Coleman. The first composition, “This Is Always” (Josef Myrow-Mack Gordon; Parker, “The Complete” Dial 1015A), has Parker in a supportive role during this beautiful ballad. After a piano introduction, Coleman starts the song with Parker backing up the vocals with background alto saxophone fills. Parker’s solo has all the richness and breadth that had been missing in his other California sessions. The transcription (on the following page) showcases Parker’s use of upper structures of the chords in an arpeggiated sequence. It is hard to write down the richness of his tone but it has such a deep resonant tone that it sounds almost like a tenor saxophone instead of an alto saxophone. The next composition, “Dark Shadows” (Shifty Henry; Parker, “The Complete” 1014), is a stylish blues number. Parker plays the introduction, and then there are two verses, a chorus and another verse where he does not play at all. His solo during this composition is very controlled and thoughtful. “Bird’s Nest” (Parker, “The Complete” Dial 1014) is more like the tunes Parker had been recording over the last few sessions. The composition is based on “I Got Rhythm” and is at a brisk tempo of quarter note=ca.276. Although the tempo is very brisk, it has none of the frenzied feel of compositions from the last session such as “Max Making Wax.” “Cool Blues” (Parker, “The Complete” Dial 1015) is just that, a cool blues.

This Is Always - Josef Myrow-Mack Gordon

Charlie Parker - Alto Saxophone Solo with upper structure note:

$\text{♩} = 63$



The last session in California took place on February 26, 1947 and once again at the C. P. MacGregor Studios, Hollywood. Released as Charlie Parker's New Stars, the personnel are: Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; Howard McGhee, trumpet; Wardell Gray, tenor saxophone; Michael "Dodo" Marmarosa, piano; Barney Kessel, guitar; George "Red" Callender, bass; and Donald Lamond, drums.

This ensemble is larger than Parker had been using. The addition of tenor saxophone and guitar give a much fuller sound to the compositions. "Relaxin' at Camarillo" (Parker, "The Complete" Dial 1012) is a twelve bar blues with a beautiful introduction by pianist Marmarosa, which is also the way the composition ends. The theme of the song is played by all three horn players with the piano and guitar comping chords (playing chords in a rhythmic improvised manner) behind the other instrumentalists. "Cheers" (Howard McGhee, Parker, "The Complete" Dial 1013) is a thirty-two measure AABA chorus based on the A progression of "I Got Rhythm" (George Gershwin-Ira Gershwin) and the B progression of "Honeysuckle Rose" (Thomas "Fats" Waller-Andy Razaf.) All three horns play in unison (the same note played by more than one instrument) on the A section, and Parker only on the B section. What is interesting from a rhythm section perspective (piano, guitar, bass and drums) is that only the guitar is playing behind the other instruments during both themes, during the A-B sections and also during their solos. The piano is only present during the introduction of the composition and the piano solo. What you can construe from this is that you did not want these two rhythmic instruments (guitar and piano) getting in each other's way and possibly altering the rhythm of the composition. "Carvin' the Bird" (Howard McGhee; Parker, "The Complete" Dial 1013) is a standard twelve bar blues composition. Guitarist Barney Kessel, who had a long illustrious career that lasted up to his death in 2004, plays an eight bar introduction before the head comes in. This composition

has a distinctive Kansas City Style feel. All the musicians get a chance to solo and there is a trading of fours before the final twelve bar head comes in. The last composition of this session was “Stupendous” (Howard McGhee; Parker, “The Complete” Dial 1022) and is based on the chord progression of “S’ Wonderful” (George Gershwin-Ira Gershwin). To change the dynamics of the recording session, Ross Russell had the insight to not allow any visitors to attend the recording session. Though Parker made it through previous recording sessions while under the influence of drugs, alcohol and other factors, Russell made it his decision as the producer to let no outside influences into the recording studio that had unfortunately commandeered previous sessions. The music has the same intensity as previous “drug” related sessions but the arrangements seem more group orientated than other sessions. The musicians were there to make music and not to party.

Parker’s next session was back in New York City at the Harry Smith Studios on May 8, 1947. This session was for the Savoy record label and was released as Charlie Parker Allstars. The personnel are: Charlie Parker, alto sax; Miles Davis, trumpet; Earl “Bud” Powell, piano; Charles Thomas “Tommy” Potter, bass; and Maxwell Roach, drums. The first composition recorded was what has become a jazz (bebop) classic. “Donna Lee” (Parker, “The Complete” Savoy 652) is based on the chords of “(Back Home In) Indiana” (Ballard MacDonald-James Hanley). The tempo is brisk with a quarter note = ca. 210. “Donna Lee” has become a composition that is a right of passage for aspiring musicians. Musicians on any instrument painfully learn to play this demanding piece. The bassist Jaco Pastorius recorded one of the most powerful versions of this composition on the fretless bass in 1976 on his album “Jaco Pastorius” for the Epic Record label. The unison line of Parker and Davis is incredibly tight and the rhythm

section plays in a very decisive supportive manner. This is the first recording Parker made with pianist Bud Powell.

“Bud Powell had the speed and dexterity to create piano solos that almost matched the high-powered inventions of Parker and Gillespie” (Gridley 1999:148). Parker recorded with some of the most brilliant pianist of that period – Clyde Hart, Dodo Marmarosa, and Erroll Garner – but it is Bud Powell who was the only pianist by whom Parker seemed to have a love/hate relationship with. Powell’s powerful technique (he was a classically trained pianist) was both inspiring and intimidating to Parker. Here was a musician Parker knew to be his equal or even better on his respective instrument.

My analysis from listening to these recording sessions is that Parker’s playing is at a different level during the four compositions on this session than in previous sessions. His tone has a crisp, bright timbre which is pushed along by the strong comping of Powell’s piano. “Chasin’ The Bird” (Parker, “The Complete” Savoy 977) is also based on “I Got Rhythm”. The A section is in the key of F major but the B section starts out with the ii minor (E minor) in the key of D major. “Rhythm changes” would have the first chord of the B section be A7 in the key of F major. The B section is as follows: E minor/A7/D7/D7/G7/G7/G minor/C7 back to F for the start of the A section. It is also interesting to hear Parker and Davis play in a contrapuntal manner during the A section and Parker improvising over the B section. The twelve bar blues “Cheryl” (Parker, “The Complete” Savoy 952) has Parker and Davis playing the head only once (twice through the head is standard in blues progressions). The musicians then solo over the song form. “Buzzy” (Parker, “The Complete” Savoy 652) is another twelve bar blues progression. After the head Parker and Davis solo, then Powell plays a very powerful lyrical solo. Bassist Tommy Potter then solos with Powell throwing in some explosive piano figures in

accompaniment to the bass. The freedom during improvisations is another key factor of bebop. The piano “bombs” during a bass solo is an example of this freedom. With bebop you were given the most bare bones of a composition, a lead sheet of the composition at best. It was your own unique musicianship and perspective that one brought to the composition and the ensuing improvisation that allowed bebop to be seen and heard as a unique style of jazz.

The next session on October 28, 1947 was also in New York City at WOR Studios. Listed as the Charlie Parker Quintet, the personnel are: Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; Miles Davis, trumpet; Irving “Duke” Jordan, piano; Charles Thomas “Tommy” Potter, bass; and Maxwell Roach, drums. The personnel that Parker used on this session were to become the members of his band at the Three Deuces Club in New York City. The arrangements, though not elaborate, are concise and flawless due to the tight unison playing of Parker and Davis. These arrangements are the culmination of a hard working combo. The arrangements came together through the night to night playing of these musicians. The tightness of the ensemble is a reflection of their commitment to the new music and how best to translate it for the recording studio. These songs are not long in duration and most are under three minutes.

The first composition recorded was “Dexterity” (1032) and it once again is based on the chord progression of “I Got Rhythm.” After Parker and Davis solo, pianist Duke Jordan plays through the AAB sections of the composition and then drummer Max Roach plays a drum solo on the following A section before the head of the composition starts anew (AABA.) “Bongo Bop” (Dial 1024) is a twelve bar blues with the head having a Latin type feel, but the solos have a swing feel. “Dewey Square” (Dial 1019) was named after the Dewey Square Hotel that was Parker’s place of residency at this time in New York. After the eight bar introduction, Parker and Davis play the head of the composition. The accents of the first note (on the upbeat of beat one)

give the song an immediate forward progression that makes this one of Parker's most interesting melodies. "The Hymn" (Dial 1056) is a twelve bar blues progression played at a very fast tempo, quarter note=ca.320. This composition opens up with Parker playing four choruses of solos before the head is even stated. Having a soloist do this many choruses (or introduction) before the head seems extreme. Usually an introduction is four to eight measures and is primarily used to set the tempo and key of the composition. The head of this composition after Parker's solo introduction is played as a relaxed melody in contrast to the extreme tempo that is being played by the rhythm section. "Bird of Paradise" (Dial 1032) has the introduction of the tune with an eight bar theme that was previously used by Billy Eckstein on an April 13, 1944 recording date for Deluxe Records and is also used by Dizzy Gillespie on a February 28, 1945 recording date for Guild Records, which Parker played alto saxophone on. This composition is based on "All The Things You Are" (Jerome Kern-Oscar Hammerstein II). The relaxed tempo of this composition once again showcases Parker's beautiful round tone. After the solos Davis plays the head while Parker plays alto saxophone in which he adds improvised fills underneath the trumpet. The composition ends with the introduction stated again. The last tune recorded for this session was "Embraceable You" (George Gershwin-Ira Gershwin; Dial 1024). The form is ABAC. This composition has solid performances from the entire ensemble.

On November 4, 1947 the Charlie Parker Quintet once again entered the WOR Studios in New York City. The personnel are the same as the previous recording date: Charlie Parker, alto sax; Miles Davis, trumpet; Irving "Duke" Jordan, piano; Charles Thomas "Tommy" Potter, bass; and Maxwell Roach, drums. This recording session was very close in time to the previous recording session. Ross Russell wanted to have additional tracks in the can (recorded songs waiting to be released) in anticipation of an upcoming recording ban in 1948 by the AFM.

“Bird Feathers” (Parker, “The Complete” Dial 1058) is a twelve bar blues form that has Parker and Davis playing the head in a very tight unison arrangement. It is interesting to note here the increasing visibility of Max Roach’s drumming. After the rest of the ensemble solos, Roach is given a full chorus, twelve bars to do his own solo before the final head comes in. “Klactoveesedstene” (Parker, “The Complete” Dial 1040) has the introduction (and the ending), which references the theme as used in “The Chase” (Dexter Gordon-Wardell Gray) and the rest of the composition is based on “Perdido” (Juan Tizol). This AABA form composition has Parker and Davis playing the A section, and Parker playing the B section. After the solos by the entire ensemble, Max Roach is once again given a solo during the A section. “Scrapple from the Apple” (Parker, “The Complete” Dial 1021) is another classic Parker tune. After an eight measure introduction from Duke Jordan, it has a thirty-two measure AABA form which is based on the chord progression of “Honey Suckle Rose” and the bridge to “I Got Rhythm”. The tempo is at a quarter note =ca.205, but it has a relaxed feel to it which I believe is attributed to the fact that these are a group of musicians who were playing together all the time through rehearsing and gigging.

My own experience as a musician in a sense mirrors this in that when I have been in a band that rehearses and gigs a lot as opposed to the one nighters playing with different musicians, the music takes on new dimensions. It could be that musicians on any level who play with the same group of musicians for a long period of time form a trust and bond with the others that allows them the freedom to not worry about the others and be able to play without any distractions or concerns. This artistic freedom characterizes the continuing embodiment of bebop as developed by Parker and other musicians.

After this session Parker and his ensemble left New York City to play a two week engagement at the El Sino Club in Detroit, Michigan. Parker was ill from bad heroin and had a confrontation with the club owner. He then proceeded to walk out on the gig and finished the evening by throwing his alto saxophone out the fourth-floor hotel room. His instrument was broken beyond repair. A representative from the Gale Agency (Parker's booking agency) was sent to bring Parker back from Detroit. After much negotiation Parker convinced the agency to give him another chance. The agency even advanced him money to buy a new alto saxophone, the latest model from Selmer et Cie, Paris, France.

Parker's last session for Dial Records took place on December 17, 1947 at WOR Studios in New York City. This session was released as the Charlie Parker Sextet, and the personnel on this recording are: Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; Miles Davis, trumpet; James "J.J." Johnson, trombone; Irving "Duke" Jordan, piano; Charles Thomas "Tommy" Potter, bass; and Maxwell Roach, drums. "Drifting on a Reed" (Parker, "The Complete" Dial 1056) is a standard twelve bar blues progression. The head is played through twice and the addition of J.J. Johnson on trombone gives the head a rounder, fuller sound than previous recordings that had only two horns. Parker, equipped with his new Selmer alto saxophone, plays in a very resonant, full bodied manner, taking three choruses of solos on this composition. The trombone solo by J.J. Johnson is very precise; the notes are very distinct and clear. Davis' solo, which follows Johnson's, is also very concise and clear, hitting each note with a precise tone. "Quasimodo" (Parker, "The Complete" Dial 1015) is based on the chord progression of "Embraceable You" (George Gershwin-Ira Gershwin) and has an ABAC form. Once again the addition of the trombone gives the head a very full and rich quality. Parker's tone on his solo is exquisite. During Davis' solo on the B section, the harmon mute (con sordino) that he put in the bell of his trumpet is very much in the

style that Dizzy Gillespie used and something Davis would use throughout his career. “Charlie’s Wig” (Parker, “The Complete” Dial 1040) is a thirty-two measure ABAC form based on the chord progression “When I Grow Too Old To Dream” (Sigmund Romberg-Oscar Hammerstein II). After a short introduction the alto saxophone, trumpet and trombone state the theme, and then Parker plays the bridge. The three horns come back with their unison line before the solos. After Parker solos throughout the composition, Johnson plays a muted trombone solo that works nicely within the framework of the composition. Davis once again uses a mute during his solo. “Bongo Beep” (Parker, “The Complete” Dial LP 904) is a twelve bar blues progression that is reminiscent of “Bongo Bop” (Parker, “The Complete” Dial 1024). It has the same Latin feel during the head and then progresses to a swing feel. “Crazeology” (Benny Harris; Parker, “The Complete” Dial 1034) is an AABA form based on “I Got Rhythm”. The first time through the AABA form has the alto saxophone, trumpet and trombone playing the head in unison. All the musicians take solos including bassist Tommy Potter on the B Section and Max Roach on the B section before the theme is stated again. After the drum solo the AA section is played by all three horns and the B section only by Parker. There is a final A section played by the entire ensemble. The final song of the session and for Dial Records was “How Deep Is The Ocean” (Irving Berlin; Parker, “The Complete” Dial 1055). The beautiful tone of Parker’s alto saxophone throughout is complemented by pianist Duke Jordan and the rhythm section of Tommy Potter and Max Roach.

Charlie Parker’s last sessions for the period covered in this paper were for the Savoy Record label. The first session was on December 21, 1947 at United Sound Studios in Detroit, Michigan, just four days after the last Dial sessions. Released as Charlie Parker’s Allstars, the personnel are: Charlie Parker alto saxophone; Miles Davis, trumpet; Irving “Duke” Jordan, piano; Charles Thomas “Tommy” Potter, bass; and Maxwell Roach, drums. “Another Hair-Do”

(Parker, “The Complete” Savoy 961) is a twelve bar blues. After a four bar introduction by Jordan, Parker and Davis play a unison line until bar five where Parker plays the head until bar nine when Davis finishes the head out with him. The second time through the head has Parker and Davis playing in unison again in bars one through four, Parker in bars five and six, Davis in bars seven through nine and both playing the head out from there. The effect here of the two horns trading the melody could be linked back to the days of the swing bands when the brass section would play a part of the melody and the reed section would answer. This can be seen as a kind of call and response in a small band setting. After the solos, the head is started again with Parker and Davis playing in unison the first four measures and then alternating measures until bar ten when the end of the head is played by both horns. “Bluebird” (Parker, “The Complete” Savoy 961) is another twelve bar blues form composition. There is good ensemble playing from all the musicians, even with the out-of-tune piano that Duke Jordan has to play. “Bird Gets the Worm” (Parker, “The Complete” Savoy 953) is played at an extremely fast tempo, quarter =ca.340. This composition is basically composed to improvise over. In bars twenty through twenty-four Parker strings thirty-eight notes together to form a single musical phrase. The musicians should all be complimented just for finishing a composition at this tempo!

The next session for Savoy was on September 18, 1948 at the Harry Smith Recording Studio in New York, New York. It was recorded as Charlie Parker’s Allstars, and the personnel are: Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; Miles Davis, trumpet; John Lewis, piano; Curly Russell, bass; and Maxwell Roach, drums. This recording session starts with the calypso tinged “Barbados” (Parker, “The Complete” Savoy 936). The four bar introduction has the bass and drums playing a calypso type beat and the piano playing some high punctuated rhythmic fills. The first time through the head Parker and Davis play in unison while the ensemble keeps the

calypso feel happening. The second time through the ensemble switches to a swing feel that continues throughout the solos. It is interesting in that on the last head after the solos the drummer is playing the calypso beat while the bass is playing a walking figure to keep the swing feel happening. There is a tag ending that begins on measure ten of the last head that goes back to the calypso feel with the entire ensemble. “Ah-Leu-Cha” [also known as “Ah Lev Cha”] (Parker, “The Complete” Savoy 939) is a composition which is an eight bar theme played on only G minor, then another eight bar theme that is of the “I Got Rhythm” chord progression starting on E minor. “Constellation” (Parker, “The Complete” Savoy 939) is a sixteen bar blues form in the key of C, with a typical “I Got Rhythm” bridge chord progression starting on the third of C, E7.

“Parker’s Mood” (Parker, “The Complete” Savoy 936) showcases Parker’s ability to play a twelve bar blues that harkens back to his early days in Kansas City with the Jay McShann Orchestra. From the introduction, through the end of the composition, the blues feeling seeps through. The relaxed tempo and his tone reflect his reverence to those times. His solo, filled with sixteenth and thirty second note triplets lets one recall the jam sessions that allowed musicians to play their natural feelings, especially within a blues progression. One can hear his anguish and the depth of his soul in this recording. John Lewis’ piano solo is one of a different kind of anguish. You can hear him moaning along with his solo, almost reminiscent of the slaves singing in the southern fields to keep themselves and their spirits alive for another day. Fanny Kimble writes in 1839, “Our boatmen...accompany the stroke of their oars with the sound of their voices. I have been quite at a loss to discover any [familiar] foundation for many [of their songs] that I have heard lately, and which have appeared to me extraordinarily wild and unaccountable” (Schuller 1968:16). One could equate the oars with Lewis’ piano playing. The improvisational

vocals by the oarsmen and Lewis' moaning (singing) seem to be a reflection of the deepness through which both the oarsmen and Lewis are recognizing their own history while being aware of the moment and place they find themselves in.

Gunther Schuller (1968) refers to this aspect of Parker's playing in this way:

It is clear by now that one of Charlie Parker's most enduring innovations was precisely this splitting of the four beats in a bar into eight. Was this - like the emergence of some underground river - the musical reincarnation of impulses, subconsciously remembered from generations earlier and produced *only* when the carrier of this memory had developed his instrumental technique sufficiently to cope with it? (25)

The final session for Savoy Records was on September 24, 1948 at the Henry Smith Recording Studios in New York. The recording session was listed as Charlie Parker's Allstars and the personnel are: Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; Miles Davis, trumpet; John Lewis, piano; Curly Russell, bass; and Maxwell Roach, drums. "Perhaps" (Parker, "The Complete" Savoy 938) is a twelve bar blues in the key of C major. Parker and Davis play the head through once and then the solos are played. "Marmaduke" (Parker, "The Complete" Savoy 938) is an eight bar theme in G minor that goes briefly to the key of F major and then the form is repeated. The bridge starts off in the key of B flat major for four measures, then has G7 for two measures, G minor to C7 to start the A section before the solos. The ensemble playing gives a lot of space to the soloists. The order of solos is Parker, Davis, Lewis, and drummer Max Roach trades twos with Parker before the final A section. "Steeplechase" (Parker, "The Complete" Savoy 937) is based on "I Got Rhythm." The four bar introduction by pianist John Lewis has a distinct Count Basie piano figure that sets up the A section of the composition. In measure two (of the A

section) the upbeat of beat two has a B natural (flat 5) on an F7 chord. This is accented by the entire rhythm section and is held for another beat and a half. This is a classic example of the use of the flat five that was one of bebop's most recognizable traits. Parker's solo is very crisp and seems well thought out. Davis' solo seems like he is struggling, even quoting "Tip Toe Through the Tulips" (Al Dubin-Joe Burke) at one point. "Merry-Go-Round" (Parker, "The Complete" Savoy 937) is a composition for Parker to showcase his dynamic and powerful dexterity on the alto saxophone. The tempo is quarter note=ca. 300. Davis once again does not seem to be able to keep up with the speed of the composition; even John Lewis seems to be struggling. After a sixteen measure drum solo Parker comes back in, confident and strong for thirteen bars; Davis then plays for two bars before Parker comes back in a very strong way. Parker and Davis play the last four measures in unison and stop on the downbeat of measure thirteen.

Conclusion

Charlie Parker led a life that one could consider as the ultimate life style of a jazz musician. From the nurturing of his mother, who brought him his first saxophone and provided a loving home for him, to the nurturing of friends and colleagues like Ross Russell and Howard McGhee, from the all night jam sessions to the one night stands, Charlie Parker lived his life like he blew his horn – with passion, determination, heartache, drug and alcohol addiction, and the need to do something in the world of jazz music that was uniquely his own. Parker took standard songs and wrote his own melodies, often at tempos that other musicians could barely handle. Parker also used the small jazz ensemble that consisted of the rhythm section and two or three horns to let the musician's improvisation be the focal point of the tune and not elaborate arrangements that the swing orchestras were known for. From the most beautiful ballad melodies to melodies played so fast they defy logic, Parker was the bridge between the old school of jazz

school of jazz (sometimes known as moldy figs) such as musicians Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong and a new awakening in America not only in music but in the evolving racial issues that were developing in the mid 1940s and early 1950s.

Bebop gave America a new, hip, cool persona. Musicians such as Parker wanted their music to be considered art and to be taken seriously. During the bebop movement African Americans were starting to embrace their own identities spiritually by embracing the Muslim faith and through their growing voice as a people that were demanding equal rights. If one thinks of bebop, one may imagine Dizzy Gillespie with his beret and goatee and hipsters using words that only the initiated would understand. One thinks of blistering music performed in small smoky nightclubs by musicians who wanted to go further in their improvisation skills and not rely on slick band arrangements or try to be a commercial success. From the beginning of his career in Kansas City to his untimely death in New York City, Charlie Parker stayed true to the music he loved. His compositions, mostly using blues progressions, the “I Got Rhythm” progression, and melodies that Parker wrote from existing chord progressions all kept him grounded to the roots and beauty of jazz. Parker loved jazz!

But even amongst other musicians, bebop was not always tolerated or touted as the next direction in jazz. “Louis Armstrong emerged as one of bebop’s harshest foes, praising the New Orleans revivalism of French clarinetist Claude Luter and blaming the boppers’ competitiveness and [weird chords] for ruining the music business for everyone” (Walser 1999:151). Cab Calloway once told Dizzy Gillespie to stop playing that “Chinese music” (Jazz From Its Origins to the Present 207). Musicians such as Parker and Gillespie had the will to create music from a fundamentally different approach than what was happening around them. The use of the flat five, and the subsequent flat nine, and the upper extensions of chords in their linear improvisations,

fast tempos, or slow moody ballads, these were all part of bebop that was different from what had come before. The big swing bands did not have the space for longer improvisations and unless one was the leader, he or she had very little say in the repertoire or tempos of the songs that were played live or on recordings. Having a small ensemble gave these musicians the creative freedom to make bebop a cultural and music phenomenon that still exists today.

Parker went on to record numerous times until his death. He recorded for Clef records, some great sides for Verve Records, and some very interesting sides called *Charlie Parker with Strings* (Clef Records) that has beautiful arrangements by Jimmy Carroll. With this recording the genius of Parker still shines through with both his tone and improvisations in a format that is heavily orchestrated, which was not what bebop was about. One of the most famous jazz clubs of all times, Birdland, which was located at 1678 Broadway in New York City, was named in his honor. There is not a jazz musician in the world who does not know of Charlie Parker and most have studied his body of work extensively. Many of his compositions have become standard repertoire for aspiring jazz musicians. The graffiti observed in New York City when news of his death hit the streets sums it up best: ***Bird Lives!***

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Recordings

Charlie Parker: *Boss Bird (Studio Recordings 1944-1951)*. Proper Records.

Charlie Parker: *The Complete Savoy and Dial Studio Recordings (1944-1948)*. Spotlite Records.

Analysis

This composition is based on thematic progressions that were commonly used during bebop era, roughly 1940-1948. This composition is loosely based on “Constellation” (Charlie Parker). It has a sixteen measure blues theme and the bridge to “I Got Rhythm.” This composition also pays tribute to bebop composer and pianist Thelonious Monk. Monk would use call and response and the use of the tri-tones within a bebop composition.

The introduction has only the rhythm section playing, which is typical in a bebop composition. The chord progression in the introduction starts on the iii (C minor) in the key of A flat (dominant) and proceeds to go to the V7 of C minor (F7) and the ii-7 (B flat minor 7) and V7 (E flat 7) in A flat dominant. This is a standard progression in bebop.

The A section of the composition is a sixteen measure blues theme. The three horns are playing the melody in unison with the piano answering in a call and response manner at measure eight. The use of the flat five on the second beat of measures thirteen and fifteen is an example of one of the most profound characteristics of bebop. The progression next goes to the ii-7 (B flat minor) and then to A7 which is a tri-tone substitution of the V7 chord (E flat 7).

The B section which starts at measure twenty-one is a standard B section from the “I Got Rhythm” chord progression. This section starts on the third (C7) then progresses in a typical fashion to the VI 7 (F7), II 7 (B flat 7), and V 7 (E flat 7) in the key of A flat dominant. The use of the flat five (B natural on a F7 chord) in measure twenty-three, and again in measure twenty-five (E natural on a B flat 7 chord) spotlights the use of this important note in bebop composition.

There is a final A section to this composition.

Form: AABA